

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
BEAUMONT DIVISION**

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

V.

NORMAN BERRY

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CASE NO. 1:14-CR-61(6)

**FINDINGS OF FACT AND RECOMMENDATION ON GUILTY PLEA
BEFORE THE UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE**

By order of the District Court, this matter is referred to the undersigned United States Magistrate Judge for administration of the guilty plea under Rule 11. Magistrate judges have the statutory authority to conduct a felony guilty plea proceeding as an “additional duty” pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(3). United States v. Bolivar-Munoz, 313 F.3d 253, 255 (5th Cir. 2002).

On October 16, 2014, this case came before the undersigned magistrate judge for entry of a guilty plea by the Defendant, Norman Berry, to Count One of the Indictment. Count One alleges that from in or about November 6, 2006, and continuing until in or about August 28, 2013, the exact dates being unknown to Grand Jury, in the Eastern District of Texas and elsewhere, the defendant, Norman Berry, and his co-defendants, each aiding and betting each other and others known and unknown to the Grand Jury, devised and intended to devise a scheme and artifice to defraud Farmers Insurance (Foremost County Mutual Insurance Company), Old American County Insurance Company, Santa Fe Insurance, State Farm County Mutual Insurance Company of Texas, Direct General Insurance, U.S. Agencies Casualty Insurance Company, National Union Fire Insurance Company of Pittsburgh, and other businesses, and to obtain money and property by means of materially false and fraudulent pretenses, representations, and promises and to execute such scheme

through the use of the United States Postal Service and private and commercial interstate carriers, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1341.

It was part of the scheme and artifice that from in or about November 6, 2006, and continuing thereafter until in or about August 28, 2013, the defendants caused claims to be submitted to insurance companies for property damage and personal injury claims which were caused by defendants. The defendants would fraudulently stage automobile collisions in Port Arthur, Texas, in the Eastern District of Texas, knowing that such automobile accidents were fraudulent, in violation of 18 U.S.C. §§ 2 and 1349.

The Defendant, Norman Berry, entered a plea of guilty to Count One of the Indictment into the record at the hearing. After conducting the proceeding in the form and manner prescribed by Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 11, the undersigned finds:

a. That the Defendant, after consultation with his attorney, has knowingly, freely and voluntarily consented to the administration of the guilty plea in this case by a United States Magistrate Judge in the Eastern District of Texas, subject to a final approval and imposition of sentence by the District Court.

b. That the Defendant is fully competent and capable of entering an informed plea, that the Defendant is aware of the nature of the charges and the consequences of the plea, and that the plea of guilty is made freely, knowingly, and voluntarily. Upon addressing the Defendant personally in open court, the undersigned determined that the Defendant's plea is knowing and voluntary and did not result from force, threats or promises. See FED. R. CRIM. P. 11(b)(2).

c. That the Defendant's knowing and voluntary plea is supported by an independent factual basis establishing each of the essential elements of the offense and the Defendant realizes that his conduct falls within the definition of the crimes charged under 18 U.S.C. §§ 2 and 1349

(Conspiracy to Commit Mail Fraud, Aiding and Abetting).

STATEMENT OF REASONS

As factual support for the Defendant's guilty plea, the Government presented a factual basis. See Factual Basis and Stipulation. In support, the Government would prove that the Defendant is the same person charged in the Indictment and that the events described in the Indictment occurred in the Eastern District of Texas and elsewhere. The Government would also have proven, beyond a reasonable doubt, each and every essential element of the offense as alleged in Count One of the Indictment through the testimony of witnesses, including expert witnesses, and admissible exhibits. In support of the Defendant's plea, the undersigned incorporates the proffer of evidence described in detail in the factual basis and stipulation, and the Defendant's admissions made in open court in response to the undersigned's further inquiry into the factual basis and stipulation.

The Defendant agreed with and stipulated to the evidence presented in the factual basis. Counsel for the Defendant and the Government attested to the Defendant's competency and capability to enter an informed plea of guilty. The Defendant agreed with the evidence presented by the Government and personally testified that he was entering his guilty plea knowingly, freely and voluntarily.

RECOMMENDED DISPOSITION

IT IS THEREFORE the recommendation of the undersigned United States Magistrate Judge that the District Court accept the Guilty Plea of the Defendant, which the undersigned determines to be supported by an independent factual basis establishing each of the essential elements of the offense charged in Count One of the Indictment. Accordingly, it is further recommended that the District Court finally adjudge the Defendant, Norman Berry, guilty of the charged offenses under 18 U.S.C. §§ 2 and 1349.

The Defendant is ordered to report to the United States Probation Department for the preparation of a presentence report. The Defendant has the right to allocute before the District Court before imposition of sentence.

OBJECTIONS

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(c), each party to this action has the right to file objections to this report and recommendation. Objections to this report must: (1) be in writing, (2) specifically identify those findings or recommendations to which the party objects, and (3) be served and filed within fourteen (14) days after being served with a copy of this report. See 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(c) (2009); FED. R. CIV. P. 72(b)(2). A party who objects to this report is entitled to a *de novo* determination by the United States District Judge of those proposed findings and recommendations to which a specific objection is timely made. See 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1) (2009); FED R. CIV. P. 72(b)(3).

A party's failure to file specific, written objections to the proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law contained in this report, within fourteen (14) days of being served with a copy of this report, bars that party from: (1) entitlement to *de novo* review by the United States District Judge of the findings of fact and conclusions of law, see Rodriguez v. Bowen, 857 F.2d 275, 276–77 (5th Cir. 1988), and (2) appellate review, except on grounds of plain error, of any such findings of fact and conclusions of law accepted by the United States District Judge, see Douglass v. United Servs. Auto. Ass'n, 79 F.3d 1415, at 1428–29 (5th Cir. 1996) (en banc).

SIGNED this 17th day of October, 2014.



Zack Hawthorn
United States Magistrate Judge